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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the issue of collaborative authorship in academia by specifically addressing fairness and equity in name ordering and by reexamining the present conventions used to designate credit. It offers scholars a framework for thinking about collaboration, negotiating the authorship terms of the working relationship, and assigning appropriate credit for work accomplished. After a discussion of the benefits and problems of collaboration, the paper suggests seven parameters for any collaboration. It then goes on to reject two common strategies currently used to denote joint authorship, alternate naming and alphabetical order, proposing three alternatives: displaying the names in a linear graphic form; displaying names in a circle, with both names beginning on the left at the equator, then one circling to the right along the top of the circle and the other circling along the bottom; and using an equal sign between names. This last suggestion is seen to be technically simple enough to be implemented both in publications and citations. (Contains 23 references). (DB)

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New Directions in Higher Education:

Expanding the Possibilities of Collaborative Authorship

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New Directions in Higher Education:

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Abstract

Our purpose as academic collaborators is to create a greater awareness of the issues involved in joint authorship and to stimulate dialogue about this vital topic. This article examines the issue of collaborative authorship by specifically addressing fairness and equity in name ordering and by reexamining the present conventions used to designate credit. We provide a framework for scholars to think about collaboration, negotiate the authorship terms of the working relationship, and assign appropriate credit for work accomplished. In addition, we offer teacher educators and other academics guidelines for conducting collaborative research and for engaging in scholarly writing with others.

New Directions in Higher Education:
Expanding the Possibilities of Collaborative Authorship

Author A=Author B=Author B=Author A

Overview and Purpose

> To cope with a changing world, any entity must develop the capability of shifting and changing—of developing new skills and attitudes: in short, the capability of learning. (De Gues 1997, p. 20)

Organizations are being called upon during these times of rapid change to pursue fairness and justice in the face of great complexity. Fullan (1999) writes that "a more critical preoccupation on the part of researchers, policymakers and teachers [is needed] with issues of power and equity in the improvement process" (p. 3). Recent calls to restructure universities have focused on the need for systemic, comprehensive change that model collaboration in research (Hafernik, Messerschmitt, and Vandrick 1997) and in education programs and courses (Greene and Issacs 1999). Positive outcomes appear to be resulting from collaborative approaches to new programs, relationships, and structures (Holmes Group 1995; Kochan and Kunkel 1999; Mullen and Lick 1999; Walker and Anderson, 1999). Researchers who collaborate with others to accomplish mutual aims can experience a fertile synergy that enhances the work of all.

In higher education collaborative scholarship is becoming more common, yet the institution of academe mostly operates as a traditional bureaucracy. For example, higher education is still infused with individualistic and competitive standards (Massey, Wiley, and Colbeck 1994). Much of the research regarding collaboration in universities explores such issues as restructuring, professional development, and pedagogy (Greene and Issacs

1999; Hafernik, et al. 1997; Kochan and Sabo 1995; Mullen, Cox, Boettcher, and Adoue 1997). Yet, although collaboration is an issue of primary importance that has significant implications for the career of academics and for the betterment of universities, the topic of joint authorship has received scant attention in the literature and in formal academic conversations.

Our purpose as academic collaborators is to create a greater awareness of the issues involved in joint authorship and to stimulate dialogue about this vital topic. This paper article examines the issue of collaborative authorship by specifically addressing fairness and equity in name ordering and by reexamining the present conventions used to designate credit. We provide a framework for scholars to think about collaboration, negotiate the authorship terms of the working relationship, and assign appropriate credit for work accomplished. In addition, we offer teacher educators and other academics guidelines for conducting collaborative research and for engaging in scholarly writing with others.

Background and Context

We are two teacher educator-researchers who have authored many single publications in our academic careers, but we prefer to engage in collaborative research and writing. We find the challenge of collaboration as a process for accelerating the opportunity for learning highly stimulating. We have been successful in our endeavors, having published numerous books, journal articles, and book chapters together and with other authors. Through our various experiences of collaborative authorship we have come to recognize the emergence of positive and negative patterns, which are addressed in the next two sections of this paper.

Our writing partnership has included an extensive review of the literature about collaboration in higher education. Within this context, we loosely define collaboration as a partnership of equals working in a collegial and interdependent manner (Friend and Cook 1990). We have also engaged in many conversations about the topic of joint authorship over the last two years, using what Johnston (1999) labels "dialogue as inquiry." In an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the collaborative process, we have tape-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed these exchanges. Using Schön's (1987) concepts of reflection "in and on" action, and connecting them with Killion and Todnem's (1991) notion of the importance of reflection "for action," we independently reviewed and reflected on these transcriptions and then compared our insights. This process permitted us to clarify the terms of our own collaborative professional relationship while examining the socialization processes that shape authoring relationships in the academy. Through overlaying the findings from our literature review with reflective dialogues about our own experiences, we have identified some major benefits and problems of collaboration in higher education. First we turn to benefits.

Benefits of Collaboration

There are many benefits to collaboration. Collaborative relationships serve as a source of professional and personal growth as researchers share, learn, and create together. Collaborators can often compensate for each other's weaknesses, strengthen their capacities as collaborators, and optimize their abilities in varied areas (Burnett and Ewald 1994). Positive synergy between academics can result in increased creativity and deepened analysis of research questions and data (Hafenik et al. 1997). Research

partnerships have also been found to develop the capacity to accommodate diverse groups of professionals and different educational cultures (Fullan 1999; Mullen and Lick 1999).

Collaborative writing also provides a system of mutual support (Miller, Nelson, and Moore 1998) and a means of mentoring as equal but different partners. Such support systems are beneficial for graduate students and faculty in universities across program areas (Mullen, et al. 1997). They are also advantageous for teachers and administrators in schools who participate equally with experienced university researchers on shared publishing projects (Mullen and Lick 1999). Partnership systems can provide a safe place where those new to the research enterprise are mentored to learn about the many facets of dissemination required for academic/career success (Engstrom 1999; Hafenik et al. 1997).

Problems in Collaboration

Although collaboration has many positive outcomes, the literature reports there are also serious problems, some of which we have experienced. These problems appear to fall into two major categories—organizational and personal. Theories of change that address higher education support how collaboration can become a valued part of scholarly life but caution that the field is "still in transition, with changes in the level of acceptance and understanding of such work varying from context to context" (Miller, et al. 1998, p. 379). Nonetheless, large-scale reform efforts, such as those involving collaboration in higher education, depend on the capacity of local contexts to guide innovation (Fullan 1999).

Higher education appears to be moving from an ethic of individualism to one of collaboration. But, the organizational structure has not yet changed to consider collaborative work equal to work done singly for scholars facing tenure and promotion.

In fact, in some institutions junior faculty have been warned that "sole authorship pieces" are essential for gaining promotion and tenure (Hafernik, et al. 1997).

Collaborative works are judged by research institutions to determine individual contribution. The relative position of one's name on publications matters greatly to the success of one's career and to the reputation of an institution. Authorship on articles and books is often quantified and judged based on name order and whether articles are singly or collaboratively authored (Rider and Broughton 1994). In some institutions, collaborators of co-authored pieces are asked to identify their percentage of contribution to a published work. Assigning authorship credit is a serious problem that makes collaboration a thorny political issue (Erwin and Fox 1994). Understandably, many scholars feel caught between the desire to work with others and the traditional values of academe that require them to be recognized and rewarded for their individual accomplishments.

We know many accomplished individuals who have willingly given up first authorship, even when it has been deserved, as a strategy for launching the career of a junior colleague. Often, however, faculty with rank above the assistant professor level automatically assume first authorship of work that is coproduced even when junior collaborators have done the majority of the work. Tradition in the academy endorses the unspoken assumption that advanced professors have the right to first authorship regardless of the quality and extent of their own contributions. Even those who approach such collaborative arrangements with a desire to share power equally may discover difficulties. Individuals who wish to reconstruct the deeply entrenched power hierarchy in higher education are challenged by the conditioning they and others bring to the

process of negotiation as institutionally unequal collaborators (Mullen, et al. 1997). Although there may be times when the senior member should take first authorship, dialogue is needed about power/status, evolving circumstances, faulty or idealistic assumptions, and pragmatic notions of what is fair and just, particularly when unequal status between/among collaborators exists.

A different type of problem ensues when the junior collaborator assumes that the senior collaborator will take responsibility for guiding the production of a high quality work and this does not occur. In such cases, disillusionment may result. When seeking to work collaboratively, aspects of personality and personal ways of relating, writing, and working can cause conflict. In an open and honest environment, conflicting styles, if handled professionally and with fairness, can lead to an enriched product (Burnett and Ewald 1994). Sometimes, however, when conflict arises, individuals ignore the problem and pretend that everything is fine. At other times conflict may be openly present with no resolution having taken place. In both of these situations, the conflict becomes destructive and potentially harmful rather than creative and potentially validating.

Difficulties in collaboration occur for different reasons. For example, when individuals initiate a joint authorship experience, they tend to choose colleagues they appreciate (Mullen et al. 1997). Then, like us, they usually believe that everything will naturally fall into place. However, when conflict occurs over ideas, or a colleague does little of the work—which Slavin (1995) labels the "free rider effect"—the other author, particularly if he or she holds junior status, may be fearful of harming the relationship and so remains silent. Conversely if s/he does raise issues, the other author may become defensive, uncompromising, or even vindictive. Powerful or weak others can resort to

the rationale that they need first authorships to secure tenure and promotion. In such cases, discussion of the deeper issues is shortchanged along with critical talk about the quality of contributions actually made.

Establishing Parameters for Collaboration

Haring (1998) writes that we must explore "possibilities . . . for creatively promoting equity in academe" (p. 43). We agree with this basic premise and believe that equity, the spirit of fairness and justice, is a vital part of organizational change that must be enacted in the academy. We have used this principle to create the following personal policies for our own collaborative work. We do not present them as a prescriptive list that others should use, but rather as a set of ideas to inspire reflection on possibilities for change in higher education.

1. To the extent possible, we will work only with those whom we can openly talk with and share our feelings and personal guidelines for collaboration.
2. If we have previously worked with someone of higher rank and/or someone whom we believe exploited us, we will deal with the person directly and try to heal the hurt we feel. If we do not think this is possible, we will reframe the negative experience as a learning opportunity that will enable us to develop some strategies to avoid having the problem happen again, and move on. The other person may not even be aware of what occurred or of how we are responding to events. We will not allow ourselves to hold grudges or maintain a negative attitude about collaboration.
3. If we know that our new collaborator will assume first authorship regardless of the contributions yet to be made, we will need to weigh our values (e.g., equality in the relationship in tension with unique learning for ourselves and implications for the

profession). Should we accept the presumed authorship conditions, we will not assume that any future writing will automatically result in second authorship for us. If negotiation seems impossible at that point, we will revert to policy two.

4. When establishing a new collaborative relationship aimed at joint publication, we will discuss important issues from the onset, such as the assignment of roles, responsibilities, timelines, authorship order, and the possibility of an alternative authorship format.
5. We will agree to be open to renegotiating tasks and authorship order based on individual contributions as the project proceeds. For us, equality in authorship will not necessarily mean equality in the writing or in the data collection and analysis process.
6. We will continue to view collaboration as a learning experience. By reflecting on the particular dynamics and circumstances of each encounter, we will be able to use the knowledge gained to better support issues of fairness and equality.
7. We will accept responsibility for mentoring others in the publishing process, particularly graduate students. We want to assure that they understand the benefits and drawbacks of collaboration, gain the ability to cope with negative issues, and learn how to negotiate their own terms for collaborative work and authorship.

Making Equal Authorship Visible

When dealing with issues of collaborative authorship, it is important to discuss the problems associated with trying to establish fairness when collaborators view their contributions as equal. Presently there are only two common strategies used to denote joint authorship: alternate naming and alphabetical order. We briefly discuss why we

believe that neither of these strategies are appropriate indicators of contribution in shared authorship.

Current Conventions in Name Ordering

Alternate naming. Many authors who work together on a consistent basis agree to reverse names on successive articles so that each receives credit for first authorship. This has the advantage of allowing each person to be cited as first author. The disadvantage is that it is not an accurate representation of the work accomplished. In addition, if the writing collaboration should become terminated, one author may be left without first authorship on an equal number of manuscripts, something that has happened to both of us.

Alphabetical order. Authors sometimes choose to list themselves alphabetically with a notation that the article was written collaboratively. This may appear to be fine for those who read the article in the journal. This form of notation may even be considered viable by promotion and tenure committees. However, this way of proceeding leaves much to chance and to the judgment of committees because such notations are not included in bibliographic citations, such as those in the ERIC (Educational Resources and Information Clearinghouse) database. Despite any qualifying statements in the text, then, the first person listed in the article tends to be recognized as the most prominent author.

These two conventions do not offer much flexibility in assigning accurate credit, especially when the authorship is equal. What is needed then, is a fuller range of options to be used and recognized for joint authorship on published works.

One possibility for creating a name order was attempted by Thompson and Gitlin (1995) who tried to eliminate the issue of name ordering. They used both of their names, Thompson and Gitlin and Gitlin and Thompson, in their notation of authorship, advising

readers to choose how to cite. We examined the reference in the ERIC database and found that "Thompson and Gitlin" was listed without the reverse option. This suggests that while authors may establish a sense of nonhierarchy, bibliographic indexing systems will replace symbols of equality with the traditional authorship order (and single listing).

Going Beyond Current Conventions

We have developed three strategies that could be used to make equal authorship visible and accurate. Two of them require some graphic capabilities. Although we think they are promising, we are not certain of their present feasibility. We therefore offer the strategies as "ideas in the making" and welcome feedback from our readers.

Linear Name Graphic. One way to address the problem of name ordering is to display the names in graphic form as shown below:

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This graphic communicates equality in the relationship of the authors. We like its styling and the way it clearly demonstrates the interconnectedness of the authors. However, we are not sure that publishers would be willing to use such a graphic. Another deterrent is that both authors' names must have one letter in common (as in the previous "e"). With the growth of computer technology, we believe that this graphic has possibilities as a solution to connoting equal authorship in some cases.

Graphic of Continuation. Our current favorite method for displaying equality of a collaborative authorship is a circle with the names of both authors connected as in

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Insert Figure 1 about here

We believe this graphic representation displays the equality of the collaboration while also symbolizing the unbroken connectedness of the contributions made, which are circular in nature as each collaborator impacts on the other and on the final product. Once again, however, we recognize the technical difficulties in production and in transferring the graphic to citation listings in bibliographic databases and manuscript reference lists. We hope that future technological advances will serve to eliminate these difficulties.

Equal Sign. Our final suggestion for displaying equal authorship is technically simple enough to implement both in publication and citation. Individuals could use the equal (=) sign in their reference list as could indexing agencies. The problem we foresee is the temptation to replace the equal sign with the ampersand (&). As equal authors of this paper we used a new symbol/format that is designed to signal equality of contribution. This is our first attempt at trying to break a pattern in academia that relegates such work in authorship to an uncertain and reductive status. With the use of equal signs connecting our names we make central the need for name ordering processes that represent equal authorship, as in our own. Thus we have put both our names first and reversed them in the citation that heads this article (Author A=Author= B=Author B=Author A). We invite other authors to consider using this alternative.

We are not sure what data base reference programs will do with our notation. However, we think that as professionals we need to approach these services and ask them to develop broader capabilities so that alternative notation systems like those that we have proposed can be accommodated. Likewise, professional journals should be encouraged to allow authors to try new methods for displaying their joint authorship.

Challenging the Profession to Create Meaningful Change

We do not denigrate or negate the value of single publications. However, we believe that in order to accommodate increasing demands for and benefits of collaboration in the academy, joint research must become an equally honored component of our profession.

This discussion on joint authorship closes with a challenge to the educational field. First, we ask that readers respond to our strategies for ensuring honesty and fairness when assigning name order. Second, we propose that all of us make a commitment to change the culture of the academy by being models of integrity when it comes to assigning credit for authorship. If we err, let it be on the side of justice. Only then will students have the example and the fortitude that will make collaborative inquiry a valued part of scholarly practice in the profession many of us hold dear.

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Figure Caption

Figure 1. Name circle denoting equality in collaborative authorship.